

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 USIE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3990

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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INFO CINCUSAFE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 26504

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, FR, PFOR

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT ISSUE

SUMMARY: A LEAK OF A CONFIDENTIAL PAPER AUTHORED BY

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GENERAL STEHLIN, FORMER FAF CHIEF OF STAFF, HAS CAUSED

A FUROR IN THE FRENCH PRESS AND IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
GEN STEHLIN'S ASSERTIONS THAT THE YF-16 AND YF-17 ARE
TECHNOLOGICALLY SUPERIOR TO THE F-1/M-53 HAVE BROUGHT
HIM SEVERE PERSONAL CRITICISM FROM THE ENTIRE POLITICAL
SPECTRUM. WHILE OTHER RESULTS OF THIS DISCLOSURE AWAIT
FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS' THE REACTION IS INDICATIVE OF
THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE FRENCH VIEW THE UPCOMING
F-104 REPLACEMENT DECISION.

1. FRENCH PRESS YESTERDAY PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS OF A
STATEMENT BY GENERAL PAUL STEHLIN, FRENCH AIR FORCE
CHIEF OF STAFF BETWEEN 1960 AND 1963, DETAILING
STEHLIN'S CONVICTIONS THAT US COMPETITORS IN THE F-104
COMPETITION ARE TECHNOLOGICALLY SUPERIOR TO THE FRENCH
F-1/M-53. THE CONFIDENTIAL STATEMENT, APPARENTLY INTEN-
DED FOR LIMITED CIRCULATION, FIRST APPEARED IN A NOV 3
COLUMN BY C.L. SOULZBERGER.

2. STEHLIN'S PAPER, WHICH WAS PRESENTED TO THE PRESI-
DENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND TO VARIOUS MINISTERS, FURTHER
ASSERTS THAT THE TECHNOLOGICAL GAP WHICH CURRENTLY
EXISTS BETWEEN IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE US INDUSTRY AND
THE FRENCH AEROSPACE INDUSTRY, NOTABLY ENGINES AND
AVIONICS, IS LIKELY TO WIDEN RATHER THAN DIMINISH, AND
THAT THE ONLY REAL HOPE FOR "TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND
ECONOMIC GAINS" LIES IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED
STATES. HE FURTHER INFERS THAT COOPERATION SHOULD
INCLUDE FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT AND CON-
STRUCTION OF A US FIGHTER INSTEAD OF FURTHER DEVELOP-
MENT OF THE FRENCH ACF.

3. FRENCH REACTION TO THE STEHLIN STATEMENT HAS
CENTERED PRINCIPALLY ON INTIMATIONS OF TRAITOROUS CON-
DUCT ON THE PART OF THE FORMER FRENCH AIR FORCE CHIEF,
INCLUDING ALLUSIONS TO HIS FORMER EMPLOYMENT BY THE
HUGHES AIRCRAFT CORPORATION, AND NOT AT ALL ON THE
MERITS OF HIS ARGUMENT. THE DOCUMENT, OR RATHER KNOW-
LEDGE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE DOCUMENT, LED TO A
LONG DEBATE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LAST NIGHT, DURING
WHICH VARIOUS MEMBERS OF ALMOST ALL POLITICAL HUES
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TOOK TURNS ATTACKING THE GENERAL. AMONG THE COMMENTS
BY FRENCH POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS: - (INFORMAL EMBASSY
TRANSLATION.)
ALEXANDRE SANGUINETTI (UDR - GAULLIST PARTY)
MR. STEHLIN HAS COMMITTED AN ACT OF AGGRESSION AGAINST
THE ENTIRE NATION. THE MANNER IN WHICH MR. STEHLIN
PLACES THE TECHNICAL CAPACITIES OF FRENCH INDUSTRY TO
THE BENEFIT OF FOREIGN INTERESTS SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO

STIGMATIZE AN ATTITUDE WHICH REFLECTS TOTAL ABANDON AND
LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY.
CHARLES HERNU (SOCIALIST PARTY)
AT THE HEIGHT OF THIS AFFAIR' ONE MUST SEE THAT THE
MAJORITY PARTY DESIRES THE REINTEGRATION OF FRANCE INTO
THE MILITARY STRUCTURES OF NATO.
MICHAEL ROCARD (UNITED SOCIALIST PARYT)
MR. STEHLIN IS ONLY THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE ATLANTIC PRES-
SURE GROUP IN THIS AFFAIR. THIS MANEUVER SERVES ONLY
TO ABANDON FRENCH AND EUROPEAN TECHNICAL INDEPENDENCE TO
THE AMERICANS WITH AN INTEGRATION OF THE ATLANTIC
ALLIANCE UNDER THE DOMINATION OF THE U.S. IT IS NOT ONLY
A POLITICAL CHOICE, BUT A TECHNICAL OBLIGATION, FROM

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 26504

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WHICH A LEFTIST GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE MORE AND MORE
DIFFICULTY ESCAPING.

PIERRE BERNARD-REYMOND (CENTER DEMOCRAT PARTY)
THE CDP HAS ALWAYS BEEN FOR AN INDEPENDENT, UNITED
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EUROPE. IN SPITE OF THE TECHNICAL ARGUMENTS PRESENTED,
WE MUST FIND A SOLUTION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN
INDEPENDENT EUROPE.

BERNARD FLORNOY (UDR - GAULLISTS)

THE DEPUTIES FIND GENERAL STEHLIN'S BEHAVIOR UNACCEPT-
ABLE. NOTES, SUCH AS THIS ONE, SHOULD NOT BE CIRCULATED
BY A DEPUTY AND HIS SCANDAL SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN CREATED
BY THE DEPUTY HIMSELF AND HIS FOREIGN FRIENDS.

ALBERT VOILQUIN (INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY-GISCAR-
DIANS)

THIS IS A LOW BLOW TO THE COUNTRY, THE ARMED FORCES AND
THE AIR INDUSTRY HERE AND IN EUROPE. IF MR. STEHLIN DID
NOT INTEND THE NOTE ONLY FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AS HE
INDICATED IN HIS DECLARATION, THIS WILL BE A REAL SCAN-
DAL.

MAX LEJEUNE (CENTRIST-SOCIAL DEMOCRATS)

THE DIFFUSION OF MR. STEHLIN'S NOTE WAS INOPPORTUNE
GIVEN THE PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES.

COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC PARTY (CDR)
THE CD FEELS THAT THE POSITION TAKEN BY GENERAL STEHLIN
IS HIS ONLY AND IT CONDEMNS THIS POLITICAL EXPLOITATION
AND THE EFFORTS TO UNDERMINE FRANCE AND THE EEC.

JEAN KANAPA (COMMUNIST PARTY)

THE STATEMENTS OF GENERAL STEHLIN UNDERLINE, ONE MORE
TIME, THE NEED FOR ANOTHER POLITICAL ORIENTATION IN
FRANCE INSPIRED BY NATIONAL INTERESTS AND NOT BY THE
METHOD OF ARMS SELLERS.

COMMENT BY MARCEL DASSAULT:

GENERAL STEHLIN, AFTER RETIRING FROM THE FRENCH AIR
FORCE, FOUND A JOB AS VICE PRESIDENT EUROPE FOR HUGHES
AIRCRAFT, AN AMERICAN COMPANY. HIS STATEMENT TODAY IS
MERELY AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE TO THE COMPANY, IN
WHICH HE RECOMMENDS SALE OF AMERICAN AIRCRAFT IN

EUROPE. MR. DASSAULT PROCEEDS TO CITE SEVERAL EXCERPTS
ON THE DASSAULT COMPANY FROM A RAND CORP STUDY.

4. COMMENT: IN OUR OPINION, GENERAL STEHLIN'S PAPER
PRESENTS AN ACCURATE ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS CONFRONTING
THE MILITARY SECTOR OF THE FRENCH AEROSPACE INDUSTRY AND
OF THE FRENCH CHANCES FOR SUCCESS IN THE F-104 COMPET-
ITION. THERE IS A GROWING AWARENESS IN FRENCH POL-
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ITICAL CIRCLES THAT THE FIGHT FOR THE F-104 REPLACE-
MENT MARKET IS NOT GOING WELL FOR FRANCE AND EXPOSURE OF
THE REASONS BY A MAN OF GENERAL STEHLIN'S

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MARKET WOULD PLACE A SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC BURDEN ON THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT. GENERAL STEHLIN'S EXPOSURE OF THESE CONCLUSIONS HAS BEEN EXTREMELY DIS-QUIETING TO THE FRENCH. THE PAPER MAY ALSO PROVIDE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FRENCH WITH AN ADDITIONAL SCAPEGOAT WHEN THE F-104 REPLACEMENT DECISION IS ANNOUNCED, AND MAY BE USED BY POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE FUTILITY OF SEEKING POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WITH THE U.S.

IN ANY CASE, THE FUROR CREATED BY THE EXISTENCE OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD DISPEL ANY DOUBTS CONCERNING THE SERIOUS-NESS WITH WHICH THE FRENCH VIEW THE UPCOMING F-104 RE-PLACEMENT DECISION. IN VIEW OF YESTERDAY'S EVENTS' IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT ALLUSIONS TO POLITICAL REPER-CUSSIONS IN THIS CASE ARE MERELY PART OF A SALES PITCH.

BY SEPARATE TELEGRAMS, EMBASSY IS SUBMITTING ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS ASPECTS OF THE "STEHLIN AFFAIR", AND ANALYSIS OF IMPACT ON DOMESTIC TO WASHINGTON SELECTED NEWS REPORTS APPEARING IN FRENCH PRESS.
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